Subway Terminal Building
415-17 South Hill Street
Los Angeles
Los Angeles County
California

HABS No. CA-2154

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SUBWAY TERMINAL BUILDING

HABS No. CA-2154

1. Location: 415-417 South Hill Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013

2. Present Owner: STB Associates

3. Present Occupant: Offices including STB Associates, Veteran's Administration Clinic, various professionals

4. Present Use: Office Building

5. Significance: The Subway Terminal Building was designed by the prominent architectural firm of Schultze and Weaver who were responsible for many buildings in the Los Angeles area done in the Italian Renaissance style. The building was rated locally as the largest and most important project of the year. It is also an important part of the transportation history of Los Angeles. The twelve story building surmounted a network of underground rail lines linking Pacific Electric's downtown terminal with Santa Monica and Hollywood by means of a tunnel through Bunker Hill. The system was designed to provide traffic relief in the downtown area by taking 1200 Pacific Electric cars off surface streets. It also reduced commuting time from the suburbs to the downtown area.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: 1925 (City of Los Angeles building permits)

2. Architects: Schultze and Weaver

Schultze and Weaver - The firm of Schultze and Weaver designed a large number of prominent buildings in Los Angeles. Schultze, the senior member of the firm died in 1951 at the age of seventy-three. In addition to the Subway Terminal Building, Schultze and Weaver designed the Jonathan Club in Los Angeles.

3. Original and Subsequent Owners

1925 Deed, recorded April 22, 1925, in Book 3943, page 222
Pacific Electric Railroad Company to Subway Terminal Corporation

1962 Name change, Office of Secretary of State, State of California, filed October 1, 1962
Subway Terminal Corporation to Signal Insurance Company

1979 Order No. 79-525620, recorded May 16, 1979, Superior Court, County of Los Angeles (Case No. C. 136919)
Insurance Commissioner, State of California, appointed liquidator of assets of Signal Insurance Corporation

1979 Order No. 79-525619, recorded May 16, 1979, Superior Court, County of Los Angeles (Case No. C. 136919)
Authorizes sale of Subway Terminal Property to David E. Hart (STB Associates)

1979 Deed No. 79-525622, recorded May 16, 1979, Wesley J. Kinder, Insurance Commissioner, State of California to STB Associates

4. Builder: P. J. Walker

5. Original Plans and Construction: Original plans are available in the offices of STB Associates

6. Alterations and Additions: There have been some minor alterations to the street level facade and interior alterations at mezzanine and track level to accommodate present office uses.

B. Historical Context: The area on the west side of Hill Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets had been a site of Pacific Electric operations for many years before the construction of the building. Several surface terminals had been erected on that site, the last directly south of the present building. The demand for service required expansion of each of the predecessor terminals until finally the Subway Terminal Building was built to meet the demand.

At the time it was built, the location of the business district had already begun to shift toward Pershing Square. Erection of Subway Terminal was perceived as a means of increasing property values in the heart of the metropolitan area. It was also hoped that the building, both because of its size and its function as a transportation terminus would serve as a reference point and thus stabilize the development of a central business district.

At the height of its use during World War II, Subway Terminal Building served 65,000 people a day. The last train used its tunnel in 1955 and portions of the tunnel were filled in in the 1960's.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The building consists of a twelve story and basement structure. Entrance to the building is on Hill Street. Light courts on the south side of the building divide it into four bays. Exterior walls of the building are brick with terra cotta facing on the Hill Street facade above the lower stories. The lower stories are faced in granite.

   Major architectural details include the setback of the upper two stories with a broad bracketed cornice above. In the top two floors the windows are paired in a single arched surround with central corinthian columns and paired composite pilasters. Above the tenth floor there is a bracketed cornice. The tenth story windows alternate with shield panels. All windows on the Hill Street facade are sash windows. The bottom two stories are rusticated stone, and there are two large arched entrances with glass mosaic panels and coffered ceilings. These panels depict symbolic transportation scenes which illustrate the functional theme of the building. The building is in the Italian Renaissance style and is symmetrical in form and detail on the entrance facade.

   There has been some minor alteration to the street level facade but the building is virtually intact.

2. Condition of Fabric: Excellent

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all Dimensions: The building is located on a lot of 1.167 acres. The frontage is 141' and the depth is 330'.

2. Foundations: The foundations are built of reinforced concrete.

3. Walls: The wall surfaces are flat with applied decoration. The surface of the bottom two stories of the entrance facade are rusticated. The walls are brick with terra cotta facing on the Hill Street facade and the south elevation. The wall surface of the south elevation is articulated by four bays and three light wells.

4. Structural System, Framing: The building is of fireproof construction with reinforced concrete, brick and tile walls and a steel frame.

5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads: The building has no balconies, etc. However, above the tenth story there is a two story set back penthouse.

6. Chimneys: none

7. Openings:

   a. Doorways and Doors:

      There are two arched entrances on the Hill Street facade. Details include glass mosaic panels and coffered ceilings. The doorway configuration is flat, and the doors are of metal construction.

   b. Windows and Shutters: The windows of the lower ten story facade are paired in nine bays. They are flat in configuration and are of sash construction. The windows of penthouse are divided into seven bays with paired arched windows separated by attached columns and set into arched surrounds.

8. Roof:

   a. Shape, covering: The roof above the tenth story entrance facade is flat. The roof above the penthouse and twelve story south elevation bays are of composite hipped configuration with tile covering.

   b. Cornice, eaves: The building has a cornice above the tenth story. The cornice is bracketed and decorative. A simple cornice bands the south elevation bays above the tenth story level. Broad eaves with exposed rafter ends are located above the twelfth story throughout.

   c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: none

C. Description of the Interior: Since this submission refers only to exterior recordation of the structure, only a brief description of interior details is included.

The entrance lobby is done in marble with large decorated columns, coffered ceiling, decorative stenciling and decorative metalwork.

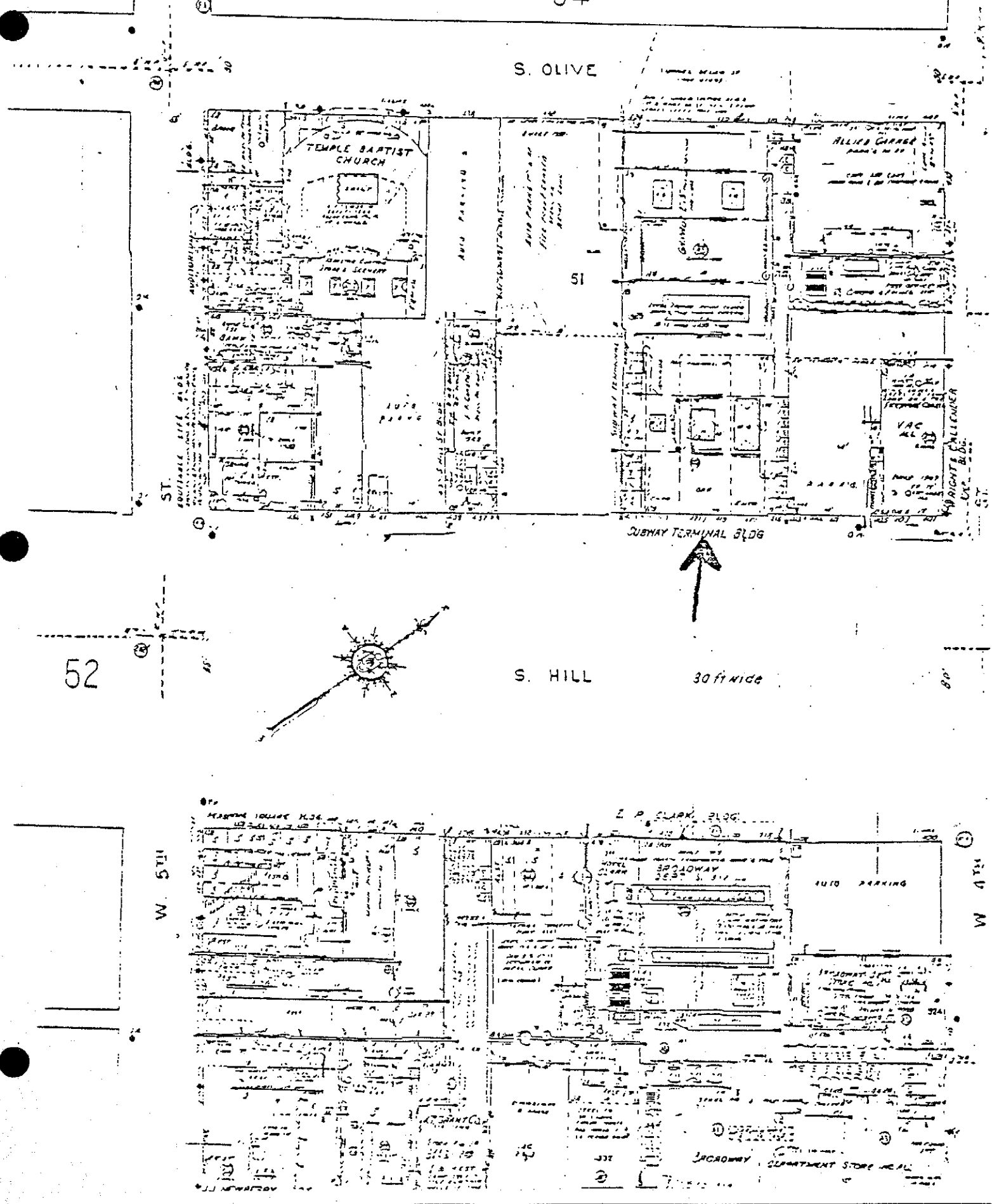
D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The building is oriented on an east to west axis. The central entrance is located

on Hill Street and is entered from the east. The building is situated in a densely built urban context of structures of similar height and mass.

2. Historic Landscape Design: The only landscape features relating to the buildings are trees along the street. These are of a recent vintage.

3. Outbuildings: none


35
34
S. OLIVE
TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH
51
ALLIED GARAGE
SUBWAY TERMINAL BLDG
52
S. HILL
30 ft wide
W 5TH
W 4TH
BROADWAY
AUTO PARKING

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

City of Los Angeles, Department of Building and Safety, building permits

City of Los Angeles, Department of Planning, Land Use Planning and Management System

County of Los Angeles, Recorder's Office, Official Records of the County of Los Angeles

2. Secondary Sources:

Architectural Digest, Vol. G., No. 2, 1926, p.44

Architectural Forum (September, 1951), p. 68

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Hatheway, Roger G., "Historic Building Survey: Request for Determination of Eligibility" (Los Angeles Downtown People Mover Program: January, 1979).

Los Angeles Evening Express Yearbook, 1926.

Los Angeles Times, April 12, 1925, V, 3.

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Sanborn Map Company, Los Angeles Fire Insurance Maps (New York: 1883, 1927, 1958).

Southwest Builder and Contractor, June 12, 1925, pp. 46-47.

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Works Projects Administration, Los Angeles Drawings (Los Angeles, 1939).

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Los Angeles Downtown
People Mover Authority
October, 1980

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Los Angeles Downtown People Mover Project, supported by a demonstration grant from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, is proposing to build an automated, grade-separated transit system in downtown Los Angeles.

A portion of the route as proposed would run along the west side of Hill Street in front of Subway Terminal Building, approximately 23 to 30 feet above the level of the sidewalk. Locating the DPM in front of the building will not require alterations to the structure, but will create a new visual element in front of the structure.